

SPECIFICATION

ELECTRICAL CONNECTOR FOR FLAT CABLE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the invention

[0001] The present invention relates to electrical connectors, and more particularly to a flexible printed circuit (FPC) connector for electrically interconnecting a printed circuit board (PCB) with an electrical interface such as a flexible printed circuit (FPC) board.

2. Description of the prior art

[0002] FPC connectors are commonly applied for electrical engagement between PCBs and FPC boards. A typical FPC connector of this kind comprises a housing, a plurality of terminals received in the housing, and a pressing member slidably mounted on the housing. Each terminal has a bifurcated contact section, and a solder tail for being soldered onto a PCB board. One end of an FPC board is inserted into an opening defined in the housing, said end thereby engaging with the contact sections of the terminals. Thus, mechanical and electrical engagement between the PCB and the FPC board is attained.

[0003] The pressing member of some FPC connectors, such as that disclosed in US. Pat. No. 6,561,843, is not rotatable relative to the housing of the FPC connector. Instead, the pressing member is inserted into an opening of the housings along a single direction parallel to an associated PCB. With the trend toward more and more miniaturization of structures of the FPC connectors, it is

becoming increasingly difficult for assemblers and users to insert and extract a pressing member into and from a corresponding opening of an FPC connector.

[0004] Japan Patent numbers 3,008,157, 3,378,990 and 2,814,447 disclose another kind of FPC connector. The connector has a structure similar to that of US Pat. No. 6,561,843, except that the pressing member is pivotally mounted on the housing, so that the pressing member is rotatable from an open position to a closed position relative to the housing. However, there is no retention means incorporated in the pressing member or the housing of the FPC connector. When the pressing member or the housing is accidentally bumped, the actuating member is prone to rotate upwardly away from the closed position. When this happens, mechanical and electrical engagement between the FPC board and terminals of the FPC connector is destabilized. Open circuits may even occur between some terminals and the inserted end of the FPC board.

[0005] In order to overcome the above-mentioned problems, Japan Patent number 3,160,665 discloses still another FPC connector. A pair of first protruding blocks extends from a front of a housing of the FPC connector, at tops of opposite side walls thereof. A pair of second protruding blocks is formed at opposite ends of a pressing member of the FPC connector, corresponding to the first protruding blocks. When an FPC board is inserted into the FPC connector, the first protruding blocks ride over and engage with the second protruding blocks. The pressing member is thereby locked at the closed position.

[0006] However, during the above-described process, the first and second protruding blocks undergo considerable interfering forces therebetween. This is because there are no spring or resilient means incorporated in the first and second protruding blocks. As a result, the first and second protruding blocks are liable

to sustain damage, which may lead to the pressing member and/or the housing having to be discarded.

[0007] To reduce the large interfering forces, first and second protruding blocks with reduced interfering dimensions have been devised. Nevertheless, after repeated mating, the interfering dimensions tend to be even further reduced due to friction wear. When this happens, the first protruding blocks only loosely engage with the second protruding blocks, and the FPC board is not firmly retained in the housing. Thus, reliability of mechanical and electrical engagement between the FPC board and the terminals is decreased. Japan patent publication number 8-279378 has this kind of shortcoming.

[0008] What is needed is a new electrical connector that overcomes the above-mentioned problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0009] An object of the present invention is to provide an FPC connector that is able to be conveniently assembled and that provides stably mechanical and electrical engagement between a PCB and an FPC board.

[0010] To fulfill the above object, an FPC connector according to the present invention is applied, and comprises a housing, a plurality of terminals received in the housing, and a pressing member pivotally mounted on the housing rotatable from an open position to a closed position. The housing defines two opposite side walls and an opening between the side walls for receiving an end of the flat cable. A notch is defined in each side wall, with first and second slanted guiding surfaces at a mouth thereof. An isolated part is formed at one lateral

side of the notch, and is resiliently deformable relative to the other lateral side of the notch. An ear portion extends outwardly from each side wall, a post is formed on the ear portion, and has a protruding portion.

[0011] The pressing member comprises an elongated pressing body. A pair of operating members and a pair of positioning members are formed on opposite ends of the pressing body. The positioning members each have a shaft for being inserted in a corresponding notch of the housing. During the insertion, the first and second slanted guiding surfaces of the housing facilitate guiding the insertion of the shafts. Meanwhile, the isolated parts of the housing resiliently deform to allow the shafts to fall in the notches, the pressing member is thereby conventionally assembled onto the housing. Furthermore, the operating members each have an L-shaped resilient arm for resiliently mating with a corresponding protruding portion of the post of the housing, to thereby lock the pressing member at the closed position. Thus, stability of mechanical and electrical engagement between the FPC board and the terminals is attained.

[0012] Other objects, advantages and novel features of the present invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] FIG. 1 is an exploded, isometric view of an FPC connector according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention, together with an FPC board ready to be inserted into the FPC connector;

[0014] FIG. 2 is an enlarged view of a circled portion II of FIG. 1;

[0015] FIG. 3 is an assembled view of FIG. 1, showing a pressing member of the FPC connector oriented at an open position;

[0016] FIG. 4 is similar to FIG. 3, but showing the pressing member oriented at a closed position;

[0017] FIG. 5 is a cross sectional view taken along a line V-V of FIG. 4; and

[0018] FIG. 6 is an isometric view of an FPC connector according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention, together with an FPC board inserted into the FPC connector.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

[0019] Reference will now be made to the drawings to describe the present invention in detail.

[0020] FIG. 1 shows an exploded, isometric view of a flexible printed circuit (FPC) connector 10 according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention, together with an FPC board 60 for insertion into the FPC connector 10. The FPC connector 10 comprises an elongate housing 20, a plurality of terminals 40 received in the housing 20, a pressing member 30 pivotally mounted on the housing 20, and a pair of metal ears 50 retained in bottoms of opposite ends of the housing 20. The metal ears 50 are soldered on a printed circuit board (PCB) (not shown), to thereby mount the FPC connector 10 on the PCB.

[0021] The housing 20 is unitarily molded from dielectric material such as plastic or the like. The housing 20 has a bottom floor 22, and a top ceiling 26

above a rear part of the bottom floor 22. A plurality of parallel slots 22a is defined in a top of the bottom floor 22. A plurality of passages 26a is defined in the top ceiling 22, corresponding to the slots 22a of the bottom floor 22. The slots 22a and the passages 26a cooperatively receive corresponding terminals 40. The housing 20 further defines an elongate opening 21 between the bottom floor 22 and the top ceiling 26, for receiving an inserted end of the FPC board 60 that engages with the terminals 40. A pair of step-shaped side walls 24 is formed at opposite ends of the opening 21. An elongated rib 24c is formed on an inner side of each side wall 24, for guiding insertion of the FPC board 60 into the opening 21 along a direction parallel to the PCB.

[0022] Referring also to FIG. 2, a notch 24a is defined in a top of each side wall 24. An isolated part 24b is formed at a front side of the notch 24a, and is resiliently deformable relative to the side wall 24. A protruding portion 240 is formed on a top of the isolated part 24b, extending into the notch 24a. A second slanted guiding surface 242 is formed on the protruding portion 240 adjacent the notch 24a. A first slanted guiding surface 244 is formed on the top ceiling 26 adjacent the notch 24a, opposite from the second slanted guiding surface 242. The first and second slanted guiding surfaces 244, 242 cooperatively form a flared mouth, for facilitating insertion and positioning of the pressing member 30.

[0023] An ear portion 25 extends from an outside of each side wall 24 adjacent a bottom of the bottom floor 22. The ear portion 25 comprises a platform 28 parallel to and spaced from the corresponding side wall 24. A post 28a extends upwardly from a top front part of the platform 28. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, a protruding hook 280 is formed outwardly from a top of the post 28a. The protruding hook 280 has an outwardly facing slanted face 282.

[0024] Each terminal 40 comprises a retention section 40a, a bifurcated contact section 40b extending from a front of the retention section 40a, and a tail section 40c extending from a bottom of a rear of the retention section 40a. Upper and lower branches of the contact section 40b are respectively received in a corresponding passage 26a and a corresponding slot 22a of the housing 20, with a front end of the lower branch protruding beyond a top surface of the bottom floor 26. The tail section 40c is exposed outside of the housing 20, and is flush with a bottom surface of the bottom floor 26 (see FIG. 5).

[0025] The pressing member 30 is rotatable between a first position in which it is oriented at a vertical open position relative to the bottom floor 26, and a second position in which it is oriented at a horizontal closed position relative to the bottom floor 26. The pressing member 30 has a generally elongate pressing body 32, for pressing and positioning the FPC board 60 in the opening 21 of the housing 20. A pair of positioning members 36 extends perpendicularly from opposite ends of a rear of the pressing body 32 respectively. Each positioning member 36 has a shaft 36a, and an enlarged portion 36b at a free end of the shaft 36a.

[0026] A pair of operating members 34 is formed on opposite ends of a middle of the pressing body 32 respectively. In the preferred embodiment of the present invention, each operating member 34 comprises an L-shaped resilient arm 34a, and a coplanar horizontal actuating handle 34b disposed at a free end of the resilient arm 34a. The resilient arm 34a comprises a first portion extending from the corresponding end of the pressing body 32, and a second portion interconnecting the first portion and the actuating handle 34b and being parallel to the corresponding end of the pressing body 32.

[0027] Referring to FIGS. 1, 2 and 3, in assembly, the terminals 40 are received in the housing 20, with the upper and lower branches of the terminals 40 being received in the corresponding passages 26a and the corresponding slots 22a of the housing 20. The pressing member 30 is vertically inserted into the housing 20, with the first and second slanted guiding surfaces 244, 242 of the mouths of the housing 20 guiding insertion of the shafts 36a of the positioning member 30 into the notches 24a. When the shafts 36a press the protruding portions 240, the isolated parts 24b of the housing 20 resiliently deform to allow the shafts 36a to be engaged in bottoms of the notches 24a. Once the shafts 36a are received in the bottoms of the notches 24a, the isolated parts 24b of the housing 20 rebound to their original states and thereby position the shafts 36a in the notches 24a. Thus, the pressing member 30 is attached on the housing 20. The enlarged portions 36b of the positioning member 30 have larger cross sections than the notches 24a of the housing 20. Thus when the shafts 36a are received in the notches 24a, the enlarged portions 36b engage with outsides of corresponding side walls 24 at the notches 24a, thereby preventing the pressing member 30 from moving laterally.

[0028] Referring to FIGS. 3, 4 and 5, in use, the FPC connector 10 is mounted on the PCB, with the tails of the terminals 40c and the metal ears 50 being soldered on the PCB. The pressing member 30 is rotated about axes of the shafts 36a thereof to the first position. The FPC board 60 is inserted into the opening 21 of the housing 20 with zero insertion force from a front of the housing 20. The ribs 24c of the housing 20 guide insertion of the FPC board 60 in the direction parallel to the PCB, to thereby assure uniform pre-contact between the FPC board 60 and the terminals 40. After that, by operating the actuating handles 34b of the operating members 34, the pressing member 30 is urged and rotated about said axes to the second position, in which the pressing

body 32 presses the FPC board 60 to engage with the terminals 40. During such rotation, when the resilient arms 34a contact the posts 28a, the actuating handles 34b are manually pulled outwardly. The resilient arms 34a resiliently deform outwardly and ride over the protruding hooks 280. The protruding hooks 280 thereby hold the second portions of the resilient arms 34a at the second position. Thus the pressing member 30 is securely retained at the second position, and reliable electrical engagement between the PCB and the FPC board 60 is attained. Additionally, the slanted faces 282 of the protruding hooks 280 guide the resilient arms 34a and help reduce excessive deformation of the resilient arms 34a. This makes the above operation more convenient and more reliable even after repeated usage.

[0029] In disassembly of the FPC board 60, the actuating handles 34b of the actuating members 40 are manually pulled outwardly and lifted up, so that the resilient arms 34a clear the protruding hooks 280. Then, the pressing member 30 is rotated about said axes to the first position, and the FPC board 60 is pulled out from the opening 21 with zero extraction force.

[0030] Accordingly, with the above-described configuration, the FPC board 60 is reliably engaged with the FPC connector 10 at the second position, and is conveniently and safely assembled and disassembled.

[0031] In the above-described preferred embodiment, the actuating handles 34b of the operating members 34 are disposed at outsides of the posts 28a, with the protruding hooks 280 of the posts 28a facing outwardly. It should be understood that the operating members 34 and the posts 28a are not limited to such configurations, and may alternatively have other suitable configurations. For example, referring to FIG. 6, in an FPC connector 10' according to an

alternative embodiment of the present invention, protruding posts 28a' have protruding hooks 280' facing inwardly. Actuating members 34' have vertical actuating handles 34b'. During insertion of an FPC board 60', the actuating handles 34b' are pressed inwardly to resiliently deform resilient arms 34a', and the resilient arms 34a' ride over the protruding hooks 280'. Thus the FPC board 60' is securely retained in an opening (not shown) of a housing 20'.

[0032] Further, although the present invention has been described with reference to particular embodiments, it is not to be construed as being limited thereto. Various alterations and modifications can be made to the embodiments without in any way departing from the scope or spirit of the present invention as defined in the appended claims.